

Executive Registry

72-139

S E C R E T

5 JAN 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Review of Records Administration in the Agency

1. This memorandum is in response to your request for an Inspector General review of records administration in the Agency. The report is for information only; it contains no recommendations. Our conclusions appear in paragraphs 9 through 17.

2. Records administration is not a subject that lends itself readily to examination by conventional inspection techniques. While we do have an Agency Records Administration Officer, a Records Management Board, a central records repository, and a regulation (HR ☐ defining the Agency's Records Administration Program, ~~we do not truly have a Records Administration Program.~~ What we have instead is a complex of separately administered and loosely coordinated records administration efforts, each of which is designed to meet the particular needs of the component it serves. Some of them-- as in RID and CRS--are individually massive programs involving huge quantities of various types of records and employing hundreds of people.

3. Because of the diversity and size of the various Agency records programs, we did not attempt a comprehensive review of them.

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Instead, we made what can best be termed a review of the current health of records administration in the Agency. The inspectors assigned to the task were then winding up a survey of the Central Reference Service and were thus familiar with one of the large records programs in the Agency. They reviewed prior surveys, studies, and reports on various aspects of records administration within the Agency and read quite widely on the general subject of records management in government and in industry. They interviewed all of the Agency's senior Records Management Officers and several at lower levels. Finally, they did a fair amount of general rummaging about to determine if the findings of prior reviews are still valid and to see if there are any glaring records administration problems needing immediate and serious attention in any of the six areas covered by HR reports administration, correspondence administration, forms administration, records maintenance, records disposition, and Vital Records administration.

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4. This office has twice in recent years undertaken surveys of the Agency's Records Administration Program as a whole, but in neither case did we succeed in publishing a report of our findings.

a. The first and most comprehensive survey was carried out in 1965 and 1966 as one of several functional surveys suggested by Colonel White, who was then DD/S.

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Although the survey was completed, no report was issued. The first draft text argued for centralized control of records administration. The Inspector General considered the text to be too harshly critical of then-existing arrangements for records administration and to give too little weight to the requirements for compartmentation of sensitive files, especially those relating to counterintelligence. He had the draft rewritten by a second inspector. That, too, was unacceptable, and it was rewritten by yet another inspector. By then, the text had become so watered down that it no longer supported the recommendation for centralization, and the effort was abandoned. The surviving text is appended at Tab A.

*Meaningful
Program as
Controversial that
we can't even get
a formal IG
Recommendation
in it!*

b. The second survey was made at your request in 1970. Although entitled "Information Management in the Agency," it is commonly referred to as the paper on the information explosion. Advance copies of the report were distributed to several components in March 1971 for review and comment. The exceptions taken by the DD/I were so numerous and so serious that we decided to defer formal publication of the report until we had completed our survey of the Central Reference Service, which we felt would give us a better basis for judging the validity of the DD/I's objections.

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The general thrust of the paper is in support of movement toward centralization or consolidation of at least some of the information handling elements of the Agency--generally in line with proposals that are now under consideration. Appended at Tab B are the summary and conclusions of the draft report plus the chapter on records management.

c. The Clandestine Service's Information Services Division (then known as RID) was closely examined in our 1970 survey of OPSER. That report of survey was issued. The ten-page chapter on records management in the CS is appended at Tab C.

d. Our report of survey of CRS is now in draft form and will be distributed soon. Our findings are generally favorable.

e. One of the better papers on the subject of records administration was written [redacted] in 1969 when 25X1A he was assigned as a Special Assistant to the DD/S. It is, in our view, a thoughtful and succinct appraisal of one aspect of records administration--the records disposition problem. A copy is appended at Tab D.

5. We also studied a number of case histories of records management programs in industry involving the classical problems of creation, maintenance, and disposition of records that are similar in many

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respects to the problems faced by the Agency. While the industrial records programs resemble our own in such areas as forms administration, establishment of records control schedules, and the building of central records centers; the most successful of the records management programs in industry differ from our program in three notable respects: they are centralized, the command structure is intimately involved in the management of them, and immediate responsibility is fixed at a higher command level than it is in the Agency.

6. Headquarters Regulation (revised 25 September 1963), 25X1A which is reproduced and appended as Tab E, establishes the Agency Records Administration Program and enumerates the responsibilities of the CIA Records Administration Officer. It specifies that the Program shall be administered on a decentralized basis through programs established, directed, and maintained for their respective jurisdictions by the Executive Director-Comptroller, Deputy Directors, and Heads of Independent Offices. Each is to designate an individual who will be responsible for the development and administration of the Records Administration Programs for components under the senior official's jurisdiction.

7. The two prior unpublished Inspector General surveys of records administration/information management arrived at essentially similar conclusions, which may be paraphrased thus: while complete centralization of records management is probably not feasible--given

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the diversity of our work and the way we are organized to conduct our business--some movement in the direction at least of centralized policy formulation and authoritative review is desirable; our organizational arrangements for records management have remained largely static while the techniques for information collection and information handling have constantly undergone change.

8. Those who are closest to the problems of records administration from having worked as Records Management Officers are quite critical of our Records Administration Program. Their criticisms appear to us to stem primarily from the frustrations of trying to carry out their assigned responsibilities in the absence of exercisable authority. The following is a summary of views on which they are in virtually complete agreement.

a. The CIA Records Administration Officer is assigned numerous, broadly stated responsibilities, but his authority is limited to little more than approving records control schedules and directing the activities of the Records Center. He must discharge his other responsibilities, if at all, largely through persuasion and cajolery. His command subordination and grade are such as to command little respect for his position. He wears three hats: as CIA Records Administration Officer, as chief of the

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Records Administration Branch of the Support Services Staff, and as chairman of the CIA Records Management Board. He reports to the Chief, Support Services Staff, in each of these roles.


b. The CIA Records Management Board, which is composed of the Agency's senior Records Management Officers and is chaired by the CIA Records Administration Officer, has a limited charter and no authority. Since its chairman does not report directly to the DD/S, the Board's views are subject to review and revision before reaching the DD/S, which the Board members feel further dilutes the Board's already weak role. The members question whether the Board any longer serves a useful purpose.

c. There is a wide range in the grades of records officers, but most of them are relatively low. The CIA Records Administration Officer is a GS-14; the DD/S&T Records Management Officer is a GS-11. The records officers feel that pegging their jobs so low on the GS scale is a clear signal that we place little value on records management in the Agency. The Clandestine Service selected a GS-16 as its Records Management Officer, but he does not appear to have been given authorities commensurate with his grade.

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d. Records administration is an activity that is routinely left to the various echelons of records officers. It receives priority attention within the command structure only when it becomes apparent that a crisis is approaching or is at hand.

e. Records management in the Agency is looked upon as being largely a clerical-type function. Those who specialize in it are marked as employees who are not qualified to do anything of more worth.

f. Many of the records officers have other assigned duties that occupy higher priority within their components than does records administration. 

g. Records administration in the Agency is based less on sound records management policies and practices than it is on the storage space available in the Records Center; thus, our efforts are heavily oriented toward the disposition aspect of records management. We pay insufficient attention to the equally important aspects of records creation and of policing files looking toward the day when they must be retired.

h. In similar vein, records officers believe that our no-more-construction policy has had the effect of focusing our records administration efforts on controlling the volume

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of paper flowing into and remaining in the Records Center to the practical exclusion of the other necessary elements of an effective records management program.

i. We encountered a substantial body of opinion holding that not all Agency records are so sensitive that they must be stored in the Agency's own Records Center. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] for example, suggests in his study (at Tab D) that it might be possible to use GSA storage facilities for some of our records.

j. The Records Center has been used as a sort of Fibber McGee's closet in which we have housed, in addition to our retired records, such things as the Vital Records needed for emergency relocation of Headquarters, the Presidential Libraries collections, analysts technical reference materials, the Agency archives, NPIC models, and the supplemental distribution (extra copies) of publications.

k. Our records retention criteria have been unrealistic, and the decisions on destruction have sometimes been made without regard for the archival value of documents. As a consequence, we retain some records for inordinately long periods and almost surely have destroyed some that should have been kept. The records people are strongly in favor of establishing an Agency archival program headed by a

*a collection
of Agency
archives*

Archives

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qualified archivist with a staff and with the authority
needed to do the job.

1. Conserving storage space by converting records to microfilm or something similar to it is very costly-- prohibitively so in some applications (inactive files, for example). Although the users much prefer to work with hard copy, space limitations necessitate increasing resort to microfilming.

9. Each of these complaints or criticisms by those involved in records administration is valid in some degree. It is true that we do not have a strong and orderly organization for records administration in the Agency; yet, it is our conclusion from this review that the mechanisms we have are getting the job done reasonably well. We are likely always to be plagued with problems in managing our records, but we probably are in better shape right now than we have been at any time within the past ten or fifteen years.

10. The recent progress we have made toward bringing our records holdings under control came primarily as a result of decisions and of instructions issued by the Executive Director-Comptroller aimed at a key link in the records cycle: disposition. The first step was the decision made in 1964 and reaffirmed in later years not to request funds for construction of another records storage building.

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This was followed in mid-1968 with a directive ordering a purge of inactive files in Records Center, since we were then about to run out of unused space at Records Center. The purge got off to a rather slow start, but within a couple of years substantial progress had been made, and after three years there had been a net reduction of 13,850 cubic feet. Although the bulk of the gain made possible by purging has already been realized, the purge continues, and the CIA Records Administration Officer reports that we are continuing to show a small net gain.

11. Colonel White also authorized installing motorized shelving in the Records Center and the renovation of a [] to 25X1A increase the storage space [] While it might have been 25X1A cheaper on a cost-per-foot basis to build a new building, new construction would have given only a few years' respite from our storage problems.

12. Although we are still realizing some net gain from the continuing purge, we would finally reach a point where purging could no longer offset new accessions. So, in July 1971, Colonel White issued a directive limiting each Directorate to a net increase of 1,000 cubic feet of storage space at the Records Center in FY-1972 and specifying that this limit would be reduced by 50 cubic feet each successive year until at the end of 20 years the net increase allowed would be zero.

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13. To avoid offsetting increases in file holdings at Headquarters, he instructed the DD/S to cease issuing additional safes and other file equipment in the Washington area unless the requirement were fully justified. The CIA Records Administration Officer reports that there was a small net reduction in Headquarters holdings during the period of the larger reduction at Records Center.

14. We believe that these steps are beginning to bear fruit. While it can be argued that they attack only one aspect of the records management problem--disposition--the fact of the matter is that, in a decentralized system such as ours, control of storage space is really the only means available for forcing the attack on the other aspects of records management. Storage is the one aspect of records management in which discipline can be enforced by directive. If the Directorates are unable to stay within their storage space limitation by purging old documents, they will have no choice but to improve control over records creation and maintenance. We see evidence even now of substantial progress in these areas.

15. One of the consequences of the purge has been a sharp increase in the size of the Agency's relatively small archives. As old files were reviewed, many documents were identified for permanent retention. When the purge began in July 1968, the archival materials

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occupied about 6,000 cubic feet at Records Center. By January 1971, this volume had grown to about 16,000 cubic feet. There is good reason for believing that, as we shorten the retention periods for inactive files, there will be a continuing increase in the size of our archives. If the archives continue to grow at anything like their present growth rate, we may soon be faced with the need for a formal archival program. There are those who believe that the need has existed for some time. We understand that a regulation on the subject is in preparation.

16. We also believe that the Agency will one day find it desirable to move in the direction of centralization of some aspects of records management--at least in the areas of setting policy and of independent review--but we see no need to rush into this. Records management and information handling are so closely related that a move toward centralization or consolidation of one is likely to be followed by similar moves in the other, and we already are thinking seriously of consolidating some of the information handling elements.

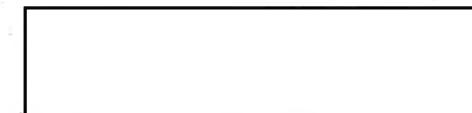
17. In sum, we came away from this relatively brief review of the Agency's records administration efforts with a not unfavorable impression of them--if not of optimism for the future, at least not of pessimism. If we could afford to commit more of our resources to records administration, we probably could build and run a more

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effective program. For what we can now afford, we are getting a reasonably good return. It is interesting to note that, while the records officers grumble about their work and the lack of recognition of its importance, they still take pride in pointing out that CIA has the reputation of having one of the best records management programs in the Government.

*Because we have
Never been audited
by NARS or anybody
else.*

Attachments as stated



Acting Inspector General

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